

# **REGULATIONS OF THE BOARD OF REGENTS FOR ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION REGARDING PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS AND ENSURING LITERACY FOR STUDENTS ENTERING HIGH SCHOOL**

**FINAL VERSION 1.12**

**January 9, 2003**

## **1.0 PREAMBLE:**

The Board of Regents, in concert with RIDE and state-level partners, convened two High School Summits (2000, 2002) representing a broad array of stakeholders to consider the current state of affairs and future directions for the state's high schools.

## **2.0 AGENCY FINDINGS:**

Summit deliberations concluded that:

1. There is substantial underachievement in RI high schools as measured by the challenging academic standards that the state has adopted.
2. A lack of adequate academic skills in reading, writing, and mathematics, with many students achieving below grade level, makes access to and success in a regular high school curriculum extremely difficult for many students.
3. There is a falloff in state assessment results for students as they progress from grade four through grade ten. This decline in performance over time is of great concern.
4. Many high schools have widely differentiated "tracks" for groups of students resulting in considerable differences in what students know and are able to do by the time they graduate.
5. There is wide disparity among RI high schools in terms of the preparation that students receive for further learning, the world of work, and service to their local community and state.
6. Far too many students pass through RI high schools without being known well by at least one adult within his/her school, resulting in a lack of understanding on the part of the school about the specific challenges and needs of individual students.
7. High schools in general have not changed sufficiently to enable their students to adequately and routinely meet the demands of the modern world.

## **3.0 ADOPTION OF FINDINGS:**

In response to these facts, the Board of Regents created a Subcommittee for High Schools to discuss ways to address these pressing issues. The Subcommittee held well-attended forums with high school principals, superintendents, and varied other constituencies to collect ideas and obtain reactions to its deliberations. After considering feedback obtained from various sources, the Board of Regents does now hereby enact these regulations on behalf of students in RI public high schools. These regulations are enforceable through actions by the Commissioner in the same manner as all other regulations of the Board of Regents. Should a school or district fail to successfully implement these regulations the Commissioner will use the authorities

vested in Title 16 of the General Laws to ensure that students in high schools appreciate the full benefits of these regulations.

#### **4.0 HIGH SCHOOL LITERACY:**

##### **4.1 Assessing Reading Levels of Students Before and During High School:**

Each school district in RI, pursuant to goals of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2002 ("No Child Left Behind Act"), shall report to RIDE on an annual basis, at a time and in a manner set by the Commissioner, the reading levels of all of its students who fail to attain proficiency on Commissioner-designated subtests of state assessments. Such reporting will build on the requirements of Article 18 which compel schools and districts to report the reading level of all students in Grades K-3. Beginning in September, 2004, districts will annually identify all students in grades 5, 9, and 11 who did not attain proficiency the previous Spring in English Language Arts. Districts will diagnostically assess each of these students and report their reading levels to RIDE by December each year. These reading levels shall be determined by administering one or more diagnostic assessment instruments or processes pre-approved by RIDE. This requirement applies to all public schools at every grade level and is not limited to high schools. This regulation is enacted in order to ensure that reading interventions are undertaken when there is evidence of a literacy problem. The district shall be responsible for costs associated with test procurement, administration, and interpretation. The Commissioner may authorize the use of suitable state or federal funds for such purposes. Based on the results of reading assessments, at all levels, the Commissioner may exercise his authorities under Title 16 to intervene in a school or district to ensure that students, at all grade levels, are having their literacy needs, as indicated by these assessments, effectively addressed.

##### **4.2 Improving literacy for students below grade level in reading:**

By June, 2003, districts must complete an interim self-assessment that describes the mechanisms in place: 1) to identify and support students below proficiency in literacy, 2) to ensure that elementary and middle schools and middle and high schools work collaboratively to identify those students who are below grade level prior to entering a new school, and 3) to support the implementation of necessary programming at the middle and secondary level to address the student needs identified in 4.1. By May, 2004, school improvement plans and district strategic plans will include specific information about the methods and means by which students who are reading below grade level will attain at least grade-level abilities. This requirement shall apply throughout the K-12 system. Any student who continues to fall below grade level in reading and/or fails to attain proficiency in subsequent years on the state assessments designated by the Commissioner shall continue to receive specialized assistance until they attain the requisite proficiency. By September, 2004, each middle and high school shall have specific programs in place to provide support to middle and secondary school students below proficiency in literacy, to ensure articulation between schools, and to support the implementation of necessary programming. Beginning in May, 2006, and every two years thereafter, each district shall evaluate, based on student performance, the effectiveness of their literacy

program. Districts shall forward this information to RIDE as part of an annual submission of their strategic plans.

#### **4.3 Literacy programming for students reading below grade level:**

All Rhode Island schools shall provide literacy instruction and support to students who are assessed as having reading levels below grade level consistent with the requirements outlined in section 4.1 of these regulations. The purpose of this literacy instruction and support is to ensure that all high school students attain grade level literacy ability. Rhode Island high schools, shall have specific programs in place to provide such programming to all entering ninth graders who are assessed as having reading levels below grade level.

#### **4.4 State Literacy Advisory Panel:**

The Commissioner shall assist in the implementation of these regulations by developing a Rhode Island K-12 Reading Policy that supplements and expands the existing K-3 Reading Policy to include issues surrounding secondary literacy. The State Literacy Advisory Panel shall provide advice concerning these and related matters, including the creation, dissemination, and regular updating of pertinent resource materials for RI schools in the arena of literacy. For purposes of implementing these regulations, the composition of the State Literacy Advisory Panel shall reflect K-12 representation in order to benefit from elementary, middle, and secondary practitioner perspective and expertise.

### **5.0 GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS:**

#### **5.1 Graduation requirements revised:**

Districts shall revise and school committees shall approve and submit to the Commissioner at a time and in a manner so designated, but no later than May, 2004, standard graduation requirements that include demonstration of proficiency and apply to all students within the district. These requirements shall apply to students entering ninth grade in September, 2004. The Commissioner shall create minimum graduation requirements to ensure compatibility of the graduation requirements among all school districts in Rhode Island by January, 2004. By May, 2003, districts shall provide a status report on their current graduations requirements and preliminary plans for devising graduation requirements consistent with these regulations.

#### **5.2 Requirement for proficiency based graduation requirements:**

These graduation requirements must include a demonstration of student proficiency that involves multiple measures of performance for all students and is consistent with the state's Common Core of Learning and any standards adopted by the Board of Regents. Each student exiting a Rhode Island high school with a diploma shall exhibit proficiency in a common academic core curriculum that includes the arts and technology. This proficiency must be demonstrated through at least two of the following: departmental end of course exams, a Certificate of Initial Mastery, portfolios, extended "capstone" projects, public exhibitions, and the use of technological tools. By May, 2004, school improvement plans and district strategic

plans must describe how high schools will incorporate applied learning for all students through classroom, work-related and/or community service experiences.

### **5.3 Role of state assessment results for high school graduation:**

Results of state assessments shall be used by the schools as part of their total assessment of students. Individual student results on state assessments should be used in some manner by the school to determine the students programming, and may be used in some manner as one of the components for graduation. State assessments should not be the sole grounds to prohibit promotion or graduation from high school and shall not represent more than 10 percent of all the weighted factors contributing to promotion or graduation. To assist districts in utilizing state assessments as part of promotion and graduation requirements, RIDE will explore mechanisms for allowing students to retake state-wide assessments.

### **5.4 Review by Commissioner:**

The Commissioner shall approve all district graduation requirements at least once every two years beginning in May, 2004, and will continue thereafter to ensure compliance with these regulations.

## **6.0 HIGH SCHOOL RESTRUCTURING:**

### **6.1 Requirement for personalized learning environments:**

Districts shall prepare and submit to the Commissioner at a time and in a manner so designated, but no later than May, 2003, school improvement plans and district strategic plans that include strategies and a two year timeline for creating more personalized learning environments for high school students. Strategies in these plans must be implemented no later than January, 2005. These plans must be designed to ensure a collective responsibility for individual students that results in more students achieving the Regents' standards for academic proficiency. These plans should include approaches such as student advisories, schools within schools, academies, individual learning plans, flexible scheduling, senior year dual enrollment plans, interdisciplinary grade level teams organized around a common group of students, and comprehensive K-12 counseling systems. School improvement plans and district strategic plans shall address the means by which these approaches will be implemented, how they will be evaluated, and how they will be continuously improved in light of information obtained. Additionally, by May, 2004, school improvement plans and district strategic plans must address strategies for responding to, recording, and planning for each individual student's social/emotional, academic, and career needs beginning no later than grade five and consistent with the intent of the General Assembly in Article 18. RIDE will provide guidance on such planning for individual students by January, 2004.

### **6.2 Professional development and common planning time:**

By May, 2003, all middle and high school improvement plans submitted pursuant to these regulations must include documentation that all certified staff will participate in at least 15 hours of ongoing professional development annually, focused on the priority areas of literacy, graduation by proficiency, and personalization as informed

by each school's student achievement data. School improvement plans must also describe the means for providing common planning time for high school teachers organized around students, especially those with the highest needs. By September, 2005, high schools must ensure at least weekly common planning time for this purpose.

**6.3 Advisory structure:**

All school improvement plans submitted pursuant to these regulations shall provide for a structure by which every student is assigned a responsible adult who is knowledgeable about that student and tracks his or her progress.

**6.4 Review by Commissioner:**

The Commissioner shall review all district personalization plans at least once every four years beginning in May, 2003, and will continue thereafter to ensure compliance with these regulations.